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ABSTRACT

This study gives counselors some "cook-book" instructions in techniques of working with groups of teachers to give the latter explicit and detailed instructions for the use of role playing with their students. Role playing is described as a minimally threatening and maximally familiar way to increase students' understanding and acceptance of the behavior of other people. The reader is given step-by-step directions as how to build the confidence and support of teachers regarding their use of role playing which may be introduced first as a technique of teaching subject matter or career education. The next step suggested is teacher participation in role playing of social situations or problems in their own day-to-day lives. The technique of role reversal is recommended. Finally, the practice of role playing as a source of insight and sensitivity to the feelings of self and others is described. Significant questions are suggested for consideration. The appendix includes samples of role playing situations which the counselor or teachers may want to use. (Author)

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The Counselor as Consultant to Teachers: Improving Communication Through Role Playing

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Counselors increasingly are viewing their role in the public schools as that of consultant to teachers. The ratio of counselors to students has never been low enough to allow the counselor to work directly with every student who might benefit from help; therefore, if guidance goals of vocational, social, and personal growth are to be met, teachers themselves must become involved. One of the more direct means for teacher involvement in guidance is the advisory program, in which each teacher is responsible for the multi-dimensional development of specifically assigned students. A more indirect means for teacher involvement in guidance occurs in the classroom when teachers accept the principle that the classroom environment must be explicitly related to the needs of each student. In such a situation, mental health and a maximally experiential curriculum can be fostered. Whether the teacher is directly or indirectly involved in the development of the student as a self-actualizing human being, he/she needs continuing education and reinforcement in this role, which is admittedly difficult (if not distasteful) for some of the teachers who have relatively narrow definitions of the teaching role. At any rate, the counselor, whether in inservice or in a modeling role, can help teachers develop the expertise needed to enhance student development. This paper is presented in order to give counselors some "cook-book" instructions to lend them confidence and promote success in their assumption of the role of consultant to teachers.

Rationale for Role Playing

One effective way of getting people experientially involved in a situation is through role playing. Role playing is a spontaneous play in which the participants act out an unrehearsed ending to a problem story or incident.

usually providing a solution to some conflict in human relationships. The sequential steps for role playing generally involve presentation of some incident revolving around a conflict; group identification of the specific problem(s) to be solved; volunteer role taking; role playing, with the dialogue and action arising out of the unique background of each cast member; and, after the production, a general group discussion and evaluation of the solution presented.

Role playing is likely to be a technique which is acceptable to teachers because nearly everyone who has gone through public schools has had some experience in reading "parts" or lines spoken by some character in literature or history. Play-acting and dramatics are popular fine arts and, as such, may be viewed with a minimum of fear or distrust, unlike some other human relations techniques which may evoke uncertain or anxious feelings. Furthermore, role playing has a long history as a teaching technique that is effective in the hands of the classroom teacher. Teachers have used role playing to improve children's socialization, to promote improved language production, and to encourage problem solving.

To summarize, the counselor who is seeking a transitional entree into the role of consultant to teachers will do well to begin with that which is comfortable and familiar, when helping teachers who disavow competence in the area of guidance. In other words, the counselor can assist teachers to develop skills in role playing.

The writers envision a dual role, here, for role playing: 1) Teachers can learn how to use role playing by actually participating in life-like problems, i.e., by role playing about conflict in adult situations, and 2) teachers can help youth use role playing in the classroom to promote the cause of self-actualization and improved interpersonal relationships. This paper presents three "How-to-do-it" steps for the counselor--

1. What to say to teachers about the desirability and usefulness of role playing to accomplish guidance goals in the classroom.

2. How to set up the training session in which teachers learn how to role play.

3. What to do with teachers during the role playing activity.

One caution: Remember that respect for you, the counselor, and the rapport you, as a professional, have with fellow professionals in education will serve as the foundation upon which you will build as you heighten teachers' skills. The teachers must have some manifest reasons to believe that you are competent in these interpersonal techniques and that you have some valid evidence that role playing will enhance learning. The teachers must also see you as a person whom they can trust. You are someone to whom they can talk, who will neither put them down nor lead them into deeper psychological situations than they feel able to handle. The attitude that you must communicate is a delicately balanced one. On the one hand, you must plainly have competence and information that the teachers do not have. On the other hand, you must present that information in such an unassuming and non-threatening manner that no teacher is made to feel clumsy or inadequate in your presence. The counselor as a consultant is both an expert and model, a mentor and colleague. This is a delicate balance, indeed!

What To Say To Teachers About Role Playing

Teachers will be interested in learning more about the uses of role playing in the classroom. You as the consultant can suggest that role playing is useful as a technique for making the curriculum more interesting and meaningful, and that it is also a vehicle for trying out new social skills. In the area of curriculum, role playing can involve situations of conflict from history or

the daily newspaper. It can also be used effectively to teach democratic values (Shaftel, 1948). In the area of teaching social skills, Moore found that daily role playing over a period of four months helped a group of primary children increase their skills in:

1. Sensitivity to the behavior of others
2. Knowledge of the causes of behavior
3. Oral language usage
4. Freedom of expression
5. Acceptance of own or others' emotions
6. Problem solving
7. Socialization
8. Listening
9. Ability to generalize (Moore, 1963)

Academic concepts and social skills are safe grounds for most teachers, and you should meet little resistance in developing role playing for these purposes. Then, if you have built up some interest in your topic, you may feel safe in continuing your presentation concerning the personal gains of self-understanding and awareness of the feelings of others which role playing may develop.

How to Set Up the Situation

To begin on the most comfortable and familiar ground, ask the assembled teachers to suggest an anecdote or situation from the subject matter of the disciplines they teach. Ask for an historical event, one that involves some type of problem or conflict, so that a solution may be role played to give better understanding regarding the causes and effects of the event. Ask for an illustrative social situation from the era being studied, so that differences in values and attitudes may be better appreciated. Next, you may want to ask the English teacher for a literary piece, a short story or poem, which could be role played to provide both players and viewers with a clearer understanding of the significance or implications of the piece. Health teachers may be encouraged to contribute suggestions for role playing incidents

concerned with public health or conflicts arising out of varied standards or personal hygiene. Imaginative math or science teachers may be able to think of incidents from history depicting the creativity and methodology of the sciences.

All of the above suggestions concern the academic and deal with traditional matters. They may be described as ways of getting students to participate actively in the learning process, of keeping learners "on task."

If career education is an aspect of guidance being stressed in your school, be sure to point out the effectiveness of role playing as a technique of focusing upon the usefulness of school subjects in the world outside the classroom. Help the teachers to design open-ended situations in which an employer or client asks the student to perform some duty, the performance of which is dependent upon something learned in school. For example, the executive may ask the secretary to compose a letter. The employer may ask the employee to compute the days of vacation due after working a given number of years, if a percentage of a vacation days is given for each week worked. A group may be asked to vote on a clean air bill to combat pollution, a decision that should require some knowledge of ecology. The possibilities seem endless.

Encourage each group member to design a situation illustrative of the vocational usefulness (recreational or social) of his/her own area. Have other group members help those teachers who have difficulty in constructing such a skit. You may want to suggest the possibility of reproducing your skits in videotaped or written form for other schools as a creative model for the uses of role playing in career education. Many teachers will be intrigued by the idea that their contributions will be disseminated to other professional people.

What to Do with Teachers in the Role Playing Activity

As each new idea for a story is presented to the group, you as the consultant should praise the teacher who makes the suggestion. Then, ask for an incident to be used as a role playing situation for the group of assembled teachers. Remember, the incident should be realistic and should involve some familiar conflict with which adults in the group may identify. Examples of this type of incident may be found in Appendix A.

After an incident has been suggested and possibly retold dramatically to the group, encourage teachers to volunteer for roles in the situation and use the role playing as a laboratory technique. In this manner, both those who participate and those who watch may learn from the experience of the moment.

Be sure to follow the role playing with a general group discussion which evaluates the solution to the problem presented in the incident. If the group is dissatisfied with the solution as given, accept another group of volunteers and have another role playing episode. Through such experiences, the teachers can learn how to use role playing with the youth in their classes.

Another level of role playing may involve practice in the use of interpersonal skills. An incident appropriate for high school youth may be, "How to ask the teacher why my grade was so low." Another may be, "How to find out what to do to make a better grade." Perhaps a topic like "How to get a date for the banquet" may be helpful. The object here is to give the role player practice in a safe situation. Examples of role playing for elementary school children may be found in Appendix B.

In a more open group, you may wish to introduce the technique of role reversal to help develop appreciation for the attitudes and feelings of the other person in the conflict situation. Role reversal requires a person to

take the role of his/her partner in a dyad. Be sure to have the teacher practice similar role playing with problems on their own level. Ask the teachers to suggest problems they may have. Then accept volunteers to role play these problems. Afterwards, have the group discuss the role playing and evaluate the solutions presented.

After a number of role playing experiences in the group, be sure to point out just what such role playing experiences may have contributed to the growth and understanding of the participants. Identify explicitly the possibilities of transfer. Leave as little ambiguity as possible regarding the usefulness of role playing in the classroom. Next, ask for the uses perceived by the teachers; show your appreciation for their insights. Then, you may wish to expand upon their insights and suggest some of your own. Conclude by explaining the usefulness of role playing in classrooms and give specific suggestions regarding how to initiate role playing with children and youth.

After the teachers in the group have become comfortable and proficient with role playing as a teaching technique for academic content, career education and social skills, they should be ready for the more obviously psychological aspects of role playing as a means of insight, awareness of feelings and sensitivity to the feelings of other people. As a counselor, you understand the value of the person's becoming conscious of his or her own underlying motives or needs in order to deal with them rationally. Unconscious motives lead to irrational behavior, and so it follows that the more a person knows about himself/herself, the more rationally he/she is able to behave. Explain this frame of reference to the teachers, and then give examples of ways in which role playing can bring to consciousness some feelings, longings, concerns, needs, values and even fears, that the pupil may not have recognized. In the "make-believe" setting of role playing,

the individual is able to reveal feelings safely, and the full effects of the behavior need not be suffered. For example, anger and frustration can be acknowledged and vented without damage to either self or the unwary class member or person nearly who might ordinarily have suffered the full blast of the emotional response. Through trial and error in role playing, the role player can try out various responses, discarding those that appear to be ineffective or self-defeating, and practicing those which are more adaptive and goal-oriented. Role playing, you will want to point out to the teachers, also develops empathy, in that the student will develop appreciation for the way the other person whose role he/she is taking may feel. The hurts, the fears and the perceptions of the other person will become more real to the individual who is acting as if he/she is that other person.

In order to get teachers to experience the human relations dimension of role playing, ask them to identify some problems in their own experiences as teachers or staff members of the educational system. Problems with students may be suggested, or problems with other teachers or with the administration. Emphasize that the role playing to be undertaken in this context is not psychodrama, that is, it does not deal with deep personal problems, nor is it entertainment, as in ordinary play-acting. Note that the role playing to be practiced here is more like sociodrama, which certainly may cast light upon personal problems and hopefully will be entertaining. Emphasize that the major orientation is problem solving. If you perceive a sense of hesitancy and reluctance to share problems with others, you may ask each of the teachers to write a problem he or she would like to see role played by the group. Then you can put the contributions together in a box and ask each group member to draw from the box and then read to the group the problem drawn. You may ask for volunteers to role play the incident, or you may want to ask different persons who you believe may be interested but not too per-

sonally involved in the situation if they will be willing to play the roles in the sociodrama.

In the processing of the roles, be sure to ask the role players what their feelings were as they played the roles. (This is often called the "soliloquy method.") Then ask if other members of the group would like to play the same roles, if they see the situation differently. And, finally, after the processing, be sure to point out the opportunities for insight that the role playing could have given, as well as the opportunities for empathy and for problem-solving.

By this time, if the feeling of openness and trust has developed, you may want to ask the teachers whether they are interested in continuing this and similar "problem-solving" conferences in the future. Your primary purpose was to give the teachers competence and confidence in the technique of role playing, to be used with their pupils. However, nothing in the contract should be construed as limiting the experience to teacher-pupil interaction. The teacher may decide that this kind of sharing, exploration and problem-solving is a supportive and effective means of professional and personal growth. You, as counselor, may certainly suggest that this may be so.

APPENDIX A

CONFLICT INCIDENTS FOR TEACHERS

Objective: To provide opportunity to explore counselor-principal relationships involved in conflict over the confidentiality of school records.

Bill (or Billie Jean) Epperson typed rapidly, trying to complete the last paragraph of his early morning interview with the eighth grade problem child, Mary Alice Hennings. He typed with one eye on the office clock, knowing that at 10:30 AM sharp, Jack (or Jackie) Edwards, the principal, would step into his office, coffee cup in hand, expecting to shoot-the-breeze for a half hour about everything from last night's NFL game to the extension course of Reality Therapy. Bill stopped typing to erase an error, and, then, it was too late.

A tap on the door was followed immediately by the entrance of good-natured Jack, the principal, coffee cup in hand.

Jack set the steaming cup on a corner of the desk and moved around behind Bill to read over his shoulder:

"...Although she says she no longer slips out of the house at night, Mary Alice...."

Bill ripped the page of the typewriter before Jack finished the sentence, and quickly slid the papers on his desk into a manila file folder, dropped the folder into the top desk drawer, leaned back in his swivel chair, propping scuffed brown shoes on the desk--seemingly building a physical barrier to further intrusion by the principal.

"Hey, man, what's the beef? I had three run-ins lately with Mary Alice's teacher. If that kid doesn't stop running away from school, her teacher wants her suspended. I need to know what you found out about her problems. Why'd'ja cut me off like that?"

What do you think happened next?

Cast: Jack (or Jackie) Edwards, Bill (or Billie Jean) Epperson.

Objective: To provide opportunity to evaluate relationships between teachers.

It had been a long day, a long week, for visiting teacher Ophelia (or Pedro) Ruiz. She signed as she dropped her quarter in the slot of the Coke machine in the teachers' lounge. When nothing happened, she gave the machine a kick, then smiled with satisfaction as the Coke can plopped into the opening. She ripped off the metal tab, flipped it into a waste basket, and dropped onto a plastic sofa.

"Hi, Nancy (or Ronald)," she said to the third grade teacher sitting across from the sofa. "How's everything?"

Nancy Baker did not reply and went on cutting out red and blue letters for her bulletin board.

Ophelia figured Nancy hadn't heard her, so she asked again, "Hey, Nancy, how's everything going?"

Nancy looked up, gave a tight little smile and stiffly replied, "Okay." Then she seemed completely absorbed in cutting bulletin board letters.

Ophelia sensed something was wrong. "Nancy," she said tentatively, "is something the matter?"

Nancy gave her a sharp glance. "Of course, there's something the matter. Have you forgotten so soon that you made me look like an idiot last Tuesday?"

"You mean about Roberto Gutierrez," Ophelia asked.

"Yes, I mean about Roberto Gutierrez! With my own eyes I saw him take that money in the cafeteria, but when you talked with him, you got him off the hook with the principal. You had no business interfering in the matter! It was between the principal, that kid, and me---and nobody else!"

"But, Nancy," Ophelia reasoned, "that's part of my job, to help kids in trouble."

"Oh, sure! Kids in trouble! Last week when it was that tow-headed little Suzie Wagner, you didn't do a thing. Just let some kid named Lopez or Gomez or Gutierrez come along--then it's your job to help kids in trouble!"

What do you think happened next?

Cast: Nancy (or Ronald) Baker, Ophelia (or Pedro) Ruiz (others if needed)

Objective: To provide opportunity to explore teacher relationships involved in conflict over use of punishment.

Mr. (or Miss) Stetson was the new special education teacher at Berry Elementary School. He had been trying for several weeks to make a place for himself among the faculty, but he often felt like some kind of "fifth wheel." The teachers at Berry had always been a closely knit group, often socializing together on week-ends and holidays. They had made it rather plain to Stetson that they not only considered a special education teacher an unnecessary luxury, but they also indicated that they thought him an intruder.

One Friday afternoon, Miss Stetson was walking past room 310 on the way to her small office, when a fourth-grade child burst through the classroom door and stumbled into the hall. He was closely followed by a red-faced teacher, Mrs. (or Mrs.) Harrison.

Mrs. Harrison grabbed Allesandro by the arm and shook him vigorously. "I ve told you a dozen time, young man, that I don't allow rudeness in my classroom. If you're in my classroom and I tell you to do something, then you do it! Do you hear me?"

Allessandro stared at his shoes, weeping softly, his shoulders heaving every so often.

Mrs. Harrison yanked his chin up toward her, "Look at me when I talk to you!" she stormed. "If there's anything I can't stand, it's a sneak who won't look me in the eye when I'm speaking. Now what do you have to say for yourself?"

Allesandro's head was tilted toward Mrs. Harrison, but his weeping eyes were still downcast. He said nothing in reply to the teacher. Suddenly, he wrenched from her grip and darted into the boy's restroom.

What do you think happened next?

Cast: Mrs. (or Mr.) Harrison, Mr. (or Miss) Stetson, Allesandro (others)

APPENDIX B

CONFLICT INCIDENTS FOR CHILDREN

Objective: To provide opportunity to evaluate shcool relations.

Story: It was Friday noon and the school cafeteria was crowded and noisy. Mark nudged Ricky in the ribs with his elbow and nodded at a boy carrying his tray toward them. "Here comes the jerk. Let's take him on, okay?"

Ricky grinned, "Yeah. You get the brownies, I get the hamburger."

Charles slid his tray into the only place that remained at the fifth grade table. He glanced quickly at Ricky and Mark, and then looked away from them as he opened his milk carton.

Mark reached under the table and bent back one of Charles' fingers.

"Awright, you guys, cut it out!" Charles yelled, trying to inch his chair away from the two boys.

Mark closed in on the right, and Ricky closed in on the left, saying, "You want me to beat ya up after school, Charlie? Now don't give us any problems. Gimme the hamburger like a good little boy and give Mark the brownies--and no sweat, okay?"

What do you think happened next?

Cast: Mark, Ricky, Charles (others as needed)

Objective: To provide opportunity to evaluate community relations.

Story: Sara and Julian dragged their bicycles up the long flight of stairs and padlocked them to the radiator in the apartment hall.

"Here now, you two," said Mr. Colletti from his doorway, "you know the rules: No obstacles in the hallway--that's a city ordinance." He shook his finger at them. "You move those bikes right now or I'll report you to the fire marshal." With his hands on his ample hips, he glared at them from the doorway until the bicycles were unlocked and Sara and Julian bumped them all the way down the stairs to the basement storeroom.

The two children trudged back up the long flight of stairs and closed the door of their own apartment. "Boy, he's mean," said Julian. "When Halloween comes, is he gonna get a surprise!"

Sara laughed and turned on the TV. She flipped the channel selector several times, then settled on the end of the "I Love Lucy" show.

Julian moved into the kitchen to make a peanut butter sandwich. "Turn it up, Sara. I can't hear from in here even if I can still see the screen."

Soon after Sara turned up the volume so Julian could hear the TV, both children heard a vigorous pounding on the living room wall.

"Oh, nuts," said Sara. "It must be Mr. Colletti again. He's always angry about something!"

Show us what you think happened next.

Cast: Sara, Julian, Mr. Colletti (other if needed)

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